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INTRODUCTION TO THE NHCP-LTCF PROGRAM

Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC) in consultation with the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (ACLT) has launched the Natural Heritage Conservation Program – Land Trusts Conservation Fund (NHCP-LTCF 2026-2027). Eligible recipients are invited to apply to this federally funded program which aims to assist and support the securement of key conservation areas across Canada, protect habitat for species at risk, enhance connections and corridors and stem the loss of biodiversity. Up to $5.2 million will be made available to support eligible projects under the NHCP-LTCF program. The program is currently scheduled to conclude on March 31, 2027.

Please note that the **Guidelines (2026-2027)** *defines program guidelines for Year 8 only and are subject to change for subsequent years.*

***NEW:** NHCP-LTCF 2026-2027 funding opportunity is delivered through a single grant stream.

Important notes for Year 8 Grants:

- Required minimum matching funds ratio of **1.5:1**.
- Associated project expenses **incurred between April 1 2026, and March 31, 2027,** may be applied to the project **as matching funds**.
- Project expenses eligible from July 17, 2026 and March 31, 2027
- Preliminary title report is required for Funding Agreement execution.
- Project milestone dates:
    - **First Installment required documents** (see Chart 2 for what is required)
    - DEADLINE TO CLOSE**: January 16, 2027**
    - FINAL REPORTING DEADLINE**: FEBRUARY 15, 2027**

The goal is to secure approximately 4,800 hectares by March 31, 2027.

To learn more about achievements under the NHCP-LTCF program, please visit WHC's website.

WILDILFE HABITAT CANADA CONTACT INFORMATION

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IMPORTANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This investment in nature is an important step in achieving Canada's target of conserving 30% by 2030.

The NHCP-LTCF program is designed to directly support Canada Target and as such, **land funded under the NHCP-LTCF program must count towards objectives** for permanent or long-term protection of land, either as a "Protected Area" (PA) or an "Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measure" (OECM), as defined by Appendix 1 of One with Nature 2019:

> **Protected Area (PA)**: A Protected Area is "a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values." *(One with Nature definition, 2019).*
>
> **Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measure (OECM)***: An OECM is broadly defined as "a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values." *(One with Nature definition, 2019).*
>
> *If your project involves a unique mechanism for conservation or an OECM, please contact WHC to discuss the details of your project before submitting an application.
>
> **Note:** *Successful applications with projects involving a unique mechanism for conservation or an OECM will require approval by ECCC before a Funding Agreement between WHC and the Applicant can be signed (WHC will facilitate the ECCC request for approval).*

A Decision Support Tool exists to provide support in assessing whether or not an area contributes to Canada's Target. Applicants are encouraged to review the Decision Support Tool and assess their project land using the Decision Support Tool Screening Template for Protected Areas and OECMs to determine whether the area can be counted towards Canada's Target.

For further information, see the overview of Accounting for Protected and Other Conserved Areas.

HOW TO APPLY

Application and Deadlines

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that they have read, acknowledged, and understood all requirements of the NHCP-LTCF program. Application Forms must be completed and submitted **online only**. Submissions sent by email or mail will not be accepted. Applicants will receive an automated confirmation email once their Application Form has been successfully submitted.

To apply for funding under the NHCP-LTCF program, please follow this link.

Completed Application Forms and all required documentation will be accepted between **November 12, 2026 and December 10, 2026 at 8:00 pm (ET)** for projects with a closing date between **April 1, 2026 and January 16, 2027.** The documentation required in the Application Form is listed under *Chart 2: Checklist of Required Documentation for Application and Installment*.

***NEW:** There are no limits on the number of applications a land trust may submit under the NHCP-LTCF in 2026-2027.

Applicants may submit one project per Application Form. Each submission must include its own complete set of required documents. The maximum funding a land trust may receive across all approved applications is $500,000.00. In exceptional circumstances, WHC may, at its sole discretion, approve funding that exceeds $500,000 for a single project or for multiple projects submitted by the same land trust.

Individual project funding requests must be at least $10,000.00 and no more than $500,000.00. See Section A-2: Project Eligibility for complete details.

To ensure a fair and transparent review process, applications will be assessed for completeness, eligibility, alignment with program targets and key considerations, and overall project risk. Applicants are encouraged to carefully review all program requirements prior to submission. Applications that are incomplete, do not meet eligibility requirements, or are not aligned with program targets may be deemed ineligible. Applicants will be notified of the decision in writing.

Project Finalization Deadline: Awardees are required to complete all project deliverables and submit all final documentation to WHC by **February 15, 2027, at 8:00 p.m. (ET)** in order to receive the final funding installment. Timely submission helps ensure efficient processing of final payments and successful project completion.

For Consideration:

- Projects with higher hectares may be considered more favorably,
- Projects with higher match ratios may be considered more favorably,
- Projects with a lower LTCF dollar value per hectare conserved may be considered more favorably,
- If the project's closing date changes at any time, Applicants must notify WHC immediately.
- Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required supporting documentation is uploaded in the acceptable format at the time of application submission. Failure to provide the required documentation may result in the application being deemed incomplete and rendered ineligible for funding consideration.
- In cases where multiple eligible organizations are working in partnership to complete a project, **WHC will only communicate with the Applicant land trust on project and application related matters**. Should the partner organization wish to be contacted or included in project and application correspondence, an appropriate contact must be named in the application itself, as a secondary contact. **Please review Section A-2j: Closing Solely in the Name of a Different Organization carefully.**

Capacity Building Services

The Ontario Land Trust Alliance, the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia, the Regroupement des organismes de conservation du Québec and the Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts are working collectively to provide capacity building services to support land trusts in successfully engaging with the Land Trusts Conservation Fund (LTCF) by:

- assisting land trusts in adherence to the *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices 2019* and/or *Guide des bonnes pratiques en intendance privée: aspects juridiques et organisationnels*; and,
- providing technical support to land trusts with regards to LTCF priorities such as Conservation Planning, Pathway to Canada's Target Record Keeping, and Land Management.

Please note that WHC is the primary contact for all general program inquiries regarding program eligibility and guidelines.

If capacity building service/support is of interest to you and you have not already done so, we encourage you to contact your regional representative directly:

- Morgan Roblin, Director of Conservation Science – Ontario Land Trust Alliance (supporting land trusts in Ontario and Atlantic Canada - English speaking)
- Nelly Béchir, Members Services Liaison – Regroupement des organismes de conservation du Québec (supporting land trusts in Québec and Atlantic Canada - French speaking)
- Dave Hillary Executive Director – the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia (supporting land trusts in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan)
- Renata Woodward, Executive Director – The Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts (supporting land trusts nationally)

FUNDING

WHC is the sign off authority on all funds and funding agreements for successful projects under the NHCP-LTCF. WHC reserves the right to award partial funding to eligible land trusts.

*Please also note that:

- NHCP-LTCF funds can be combined with other Canadian federal funds on the same project, as long as funds go towards **unique (separate) expenditures and hectares are prorated** (see program requirement details)
    - Proof that federal funds spent on unique (separate) expenditures is required.
- Other Canadian federal funds cannot be used as matching funds for NHCP-LTCF funds; and,
- If your project is receiving funding from other federal government sources, hectares may be shared between programs. **HOWEVER**, hectares must be prorated based on percentage of Government of Canada funding received**.**
    - WHC will provide a multi federal fund budget template,
    - **Double counting of hectares must not occur.** For details see section A-2m,

Please note that receiving funding from multiple federal sources for the same project is generally discouraged and should be avoided where feasible.

Eligible projects that are not initially approved for funding will be placed on a "waiting list," Applicants will be notified.

In the event that NHCP-LTCF funds are returned to the Program, the Funding Agreement will be nullified and WHC will begin the process of reallocating the returned funds to eligible projects on the "waiting list" before the end of the program year. Applicants with projects included on the "waiting list" will be contacted if funds become available for their project.

SECTION A – NHCP-LTCF PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

A-1: Land Trust Eligibility

To be eligible to apply to the NHCP-LTCF Program, Applicants must meet all the criteria below:

i. Applicants must be a Canadian land trust: *A Canadian Land Trust is defined as a not-for-profit conservation organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by acquiring land or Conservation Agreements (or assisting with their acquisition) and/or stewarding/managing land or Conservation Agreements (CLT Standards & Practices 2019).*
ii. Applicants must be a registered Canadian charity.
iii. Applicants must be in compliance or working towards substantial compliance with the *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices 2019* or *Guide des bonnes pratiques en intendance privée: aspects juridiques et organisationnels.* This includes, in particular, compliance or substantial compliance with Standards 8-12 which address the securement and stewarding of conservation lands.

    Compliance or substantial compliance may be demonstrated through a Board resolution, an attestation by a senior officer of the organization, or proof of Conservation Excellence Certification.

Note: It is strongly encouraged that land trusts work diligently and expediently to become compliant with the Baseline Documentation Reports requirements therein. It is expected that Canadian land trusts will be making significant progress in working towards or achieving compliance.

A-2: Project Eligibility

a) Project Definition

A project is defined as a parcel or grouping of parcels that may or may not share the same landowner (see multiple ownership below):

- sharing the same conservation objectives (see below);
- clearly contributing to Canada's Target (i.e., can be counted as Protected Areas or Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures); and,
- consisting of either conservation agreements or fee simple acquisition or a combination thereof.

***NOTE**: Proposed projects that do not consist of traditional fee simple or conservation agreement transaction or conservation mechanism, may be considered on a case by case basis and would require ECCC approval. Contact WHC staff in advance of application submission for review.

Shared and mutually beneficial conservation objectives may include:

- Where parcels occur in a cluster, connectivity/continuity of protected lands, providing increased ecosystem integrity and risk mitigation for climate change or as key wildlife corridors.
- Where parcels are more geographically dispersed, intact habitat for a particular species at risk or protection of rare ecosystem types, priority habitats or protection of key stopover points on migratory pathways.

b) Multiple Landowners

It is important to note that consideration of multiple landowners under the NHCP-LTCF program exists to support land trusts in cases where securing land with multiple landowners is required for the viability of the project.

A project may include up to 2 individual landowners. Any proposed project with more than 2 individual landowners will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must provide a clear rationale as to why multiple ownership is essential to the successful completion of the project. Only projects that have demonstrated sufficient rationale will be eligible and will be subject to an additional risk assessment by WHC. The additional assessment will include consideration of the likelihood of securing all parcels, if applicable, within the proposed timeline with available resources. WHC may request additional information.

Land trusts are expected to commit to protecting the number of hectares presented in the application, regardless of the number of landowners or parcels.

c) Acquisition Project Type

The acquisition of Fee Simple lands or Conservation Agreements are eligible project types under the NHCP-LTCF. If your project involves other methods of securement, please contact WHC staff prior to application submission.

d) Transaction Type (including Ecological Gifts)

Purchases, donations and split receipts are all eligible transaction types under the NHCP-LTCF.

e) Mortgages and Other Encumbrances

Fee Simple Land: Land secured by the land trust in fee simple may not be mortgaged, charged, or otherwise financially encumbered (take-back mortgages are also not permitted under the NHCP-LTCF Program). All remaining financial encumbrances (mortgages, liens, etc.) must be discharged prior to, or at the time of title transfer. Other existing non-financial encumbrances (e.g., utility rights of way, hypothèque agreements with a public or para-public foundation) may be permitted with the consent of WHC.

Conservation Agreements: Any financial encumbrances registered on the land for which the Conservation Agreement (CA) will be registered against must be discharged or postponed in favor of the CA. Other remaining non-financial encumbrances (e.g., utility rights of way) may be permitted with the consent of WHC.

Financial encumbrances are not acceptable, as remedies for the encumbrance holder normally include taking control of the property ownership, sale of the land to satisfy the debt and potential loss of the land trust interest in the land.

f) Conservation Plan

Only priority projects determined through documented conservation planning process are eligible under the NHCP-LTCF. Projects ideally fall in a Key Conservation Area (KCA), which means that the project falls under an existing Conservation Plan that identifies the land/project area as a priority for conservation. In this case, the Applicant will be required to:

- Provide the specific address and boundaries of the property, in the form of a shapefile, for WHC's verification (map check);
- Explain how the project land is identified as a priority under the applicable Conservation Plan.

Key Conservation Areas include areas identified under:

a. An **NCC Natural Area Conservation Plan (NACP)**. Applicants who wish to adopt an NCC NACP should contact NCC to ensure their project falls within the boundaries of an NCC NACP.
b. DUC's target landscapes as articulated by the habitat joint ventures of the **North American Waterfowl Management Plan.**
c. Priority Places and **other Federal, Provincial or Territorial government plans** (copy to be provided to WHC with application submission).
d. **Other science-based plans developed by land trusts** (copy to be provided to WHC with application submission).

If the project does not fall within a KCA, please call WHC before proceeding with an application. In this case, the Applicant will be required to provide:

- A sufficient **case for conservation** *(a Conservation Planning Framework guidance tool is available for use)*, which defends how the project property:
    i. is eligible to count towards Canada's Target 1;
    ii. links to conservation initiatives;
    iii. identifies the presence of critical habitat for species at risk, etc.
- A sufficient rationale that demonstrates the prioritization of the property/project land from a conservation planning standpoint and the significance of the project.

g) Joint Title Holders

Applicants are permitted to close projects in joint title ownership with other organizations, provided that all title holders meet the eligibility criteria listed in section (A-1 iii)

- The receiving entity of NHCP - LTCF funds must be the Applicant and responsible for completing the securement.
- Agreements must be made out between the **Applicant land trust and the landowner**.
- Projects involving the transfer of and rights to the Applicant land trust, as the mechanism by which land will be protected into perpetuity, **may be considered, on a case by case basis. If this is the case, please contact WHC in advance of application submission**.

h) Dispositions After Closing

Awardees must receive approval from ECCC, through WHC, for any transfer, sale, disposition or encumbrance of land, or any portion thereof, under the program. All dispositions must comply with the terms of the *NHCP-LTCF Funding Agreement*. *In order for a* receiving entity to be eligible, it must meet the following criteria in (Section A-1 iii)

The Awardee shall make the transfer of land or interest in land conditional upon the receiving entity providing a commitment to the Awardee to conserve the land in perpetuity in adherence to the *NHCP-LTCF Funding Agreement*.

Note: Reviews for a disposition request requires a timeline of no less than 2 months.

i) Land Securement Details:

"Land Securement" means an acquisition by the Final Recipients of a legal interest or a real right in a property, with the objective to conserve and protect Canada's habitat and biodiversity. The legal interest or the real right may be acquired by a fee simple purchase, a lease, a conservation easement, a covenant, a servitude, an acquisition of development rights, such as mineral, timber and exploration rights. See applicable Program Guidelines and/or contact WHC staff, for other types of agreements that may be allowable.

The Final Recipient (Awardee) that acquires land(s) with contribution funds provided under the NHCP-LTCF, to do land securement initiatives and projects, **must comply with the following conditions**:

i. Eligible land securement initiatives and projects will be those that contribute directly to enhanced coverage, ecological integrity and connectivity of Canada's network of protected and conserved areas, protection and recovery of terrestrial species at risk, and prevention of healthy species, including migratory birds, from becoming at risk.
ii. WHC shall be required to seek prior written approval from ECCC before a Final Recipient (awardee) transfer, adds joint title owner(s), sells, disposes, or encumbers lands, or any portion thereof, secured with funds from ECCC. Canada's approval will be contingent, among other things, on whether the transfer, sale, disposal and encumbrance meet the objective set out in the concept i. above.
iii. In the event the land, or any portion thereof, secured with funds from ECCC is sold, the recipient shall provide an attestation that the price obtained is at, or above fair market value.
iv. In the event the land, or any portion thereof, secured with funds from ECCC is transferred, sold, disposed or encumbered in a manner inconsistent with the terms and conditions of the NHCP-LTCF program, the recipient (awardee) shall repay to ECCC the greater of:
    a. the full amount of the funds originally transferred to the recipient for the land securement eligible initiatives and projects, or;
    b. a portion of the proceeds resulting from the transfer, sale, disposition or encumbrance of the land proportionally equal to ECCC's original funding for the said land securement eligible initiatives and projects.

j) Closing Solely in the Name of a Different Organization

Applicants **are not permitted to close the property solely in the name of a third party**. Applicants must be the final recipient of NHCP-LTCF funds and must be at least partially on title at the time of closing, except in the case of a project in partnership with American Friends of Canadian Conservation or American Friends of Canadian Nature as outlined below.

If there will be joint title ownership at closing, the applicant must indicate this on their application submission and ensure that all program requirements concerning joint title ownership, including ECCC Land Disposition Request approval, are met.

k) American Friends of Canadian Conservation (AFCC) or American Friends of Canadian Nature (AFCN)

The use of American Friends of Canadian Conservation (AFCC) or American Friends of Canadian Nature (AFCN) are an allowable mechanism to help land trusts acquire lands from American donors.

Application Forms must be submitted by the land trust, not AFCC or AFCN.

It is the full responsibility of the Applicant to understand and adhere to the rules and requirements involved in land acquisition with American donors.

l) Required Matching Funds for Each Project

The NHCP-LTCF is a matching funds program, with a required match ratio of a **minimum 1.5:1**. This means that for every $1 of Program funds awarded, a minimum of $1.50 in matching funds from sources other than Canadian federal government investments must also be contributed.

Matching funds may include both cash and in-kind contributions.

Associated project expenses that occurred between **April 1, 2026, and March 31, 2027** can be applied to the project **as matching funds** (provided that the expenses were not paid for with other sources of Canadian federal funds).

Awardees will be required to attest that all matching funds are in place and that no other sources of Canadian federal government funds have been used as Cash match or In-Kind matching funds.

In-kind match refers to the cash-equivalent funding in the form of a donation (donated land or donated services) for which no cash is exchanged but is essential to the project and that would have to be purchased on the open market, or through negotiation with the provider, if it were not provided.

- Awardees planning to include in-kind matching funds under the NHCP-LTCF **must submit evidence of the value of all donated goods/services** (e.g., a legal invoice should clearly outline the exact amount credited to the invoice for the purposes of donating the legal service). This documentation must be submitted at **final report, or 30 days prior to close** (whichever occurs first).
    - If using the donated value of land as in-kind match, the amount of in-kind match should be the difference between the appraised value and the purchase price. For example: if a property is appraised at $100,000.00, but the landowner has agreed to a lower purchase price of $90,000.00, the difference between $100,000.00 and $90,000.00 (=$10,000.00) is the amount that should be included in the project budget as in-kind match. If a project is a 100% donation, the entire appraised value would count as in-kind match.

It is the full responsibility of the Awardee to ensure full compliance with CRA rules and regulations.

m) Multiple Sources of Federal Funding

Prorating of hectares between federal funding sources is discouraged. However, **If other Federal funding is required on an awarded project WHC must be informed in writing as soon as possible**. Significant reduction of project hectares to the NHCP, as a result of required prorating, may result in forfeit of award in part or in full. Please contact WHC staff with any questions and/or concerns.

n) Stewardship Endowment Fund Policy

Organizations are required to have an established stewardship endowment fund policy at the time of application to the NHCP-LTCF. The policy must outline how the Applicant land trust manages endowment funds for the stewardship of project lands, into perpetuity. This policy must demonstrate alignment with program requirements, see Section A-3o: Stewardship Endowment Accounting.

o) Stewardship Endowment Fund Accounting

Projects funded under the NHCP-LTCF require a cash contribution to a stewardship endowment fund for the long-term stewardship of the lands. The stewardship endowment contribution must be accounted for separately (meaning the stewardship funds **cannot be pooled with general operations funding** and the earnings must be used to fund long-term stewardship of the property); however, stewardship endowment funds are allowed to be pooled in an internally restricted general endowment fund.

Funds from Canadian federal government sources cannot be used for stewardship endowment under the NHCP-LTCF. Projects must raise funds for the stewardship endowment from other sources, and funds for the stewardship endowment must be made in addition to existing operating revenue and/or existing endowment funds; **pre-existing funds in an endowment cannot be re-assigned/extended** to cover the NHCP-LTCF stewardship endowment fund requirement.

p) Calculation of NHCP-LTCF Required Stewardship Endowment Contribution

- Projects must apply a flat rate of 10% of the fair market value of the fee simple land value or Conservation Agreement value or,
- Use the Stewardship Calculator based on the land trust's estimate of the actual stewardship costs associated with a particular property.
- A minimum of $5,000 stewardship endowment must be contributed.

q) Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) Recognition and Communications Protocol

Awardees will, from time to time, undertake communications activities and outreach that will highlight and promote achievements under the Program. These communication activities must be conducted in compliance with the following Public Acknowledgement and Official Languages requirements:

- If the communication is for wide distribution or for a wide scale activity (i.e., national or provincial), then it must be made available in both official languages. This includes press releases, project materials (handouts, newsletters, reports, etc.), advertisements, and event invitations.
- If the communication is for local distribution only, then unilingual English or French is acceptable, except where inclusion of official language minority communities is appropriate (Awardees should refer to requirements in their signed Funding Agreement). If the inclusion of official language minority communities is appropriate, reasonable effort in both official languages is required for all communications.

Communications Activities and Requirements

- **Digital Promotion/Social Media:** ECCC may repost social media messages concerning NHCP-LTCF projects that were originally posted on the Awardee's social media platforms. The Awardee will reciprocate, as appropriate, for ECCC social media messages regarding the NHCP-LTCF.
- **Event Planning**: The Awardee will provide WHC with two-months advanced notice of anticipated Project announcement/event dates. Please note that event dates should not be set prior to receiving ECCC approval. As required, WHC will work with the Awardee and with ECCC to confirm any government representation at events and acquire needed ECCC approval. A detailed event plan is required. Please use the event plan template provided by WHC.
- **Media Relations/News/Press Release**: The Awardee will provide any draft news releases (using approved template provided in the Communications Toolkit) to WHC at least six weeks before the proposed announcement date for review by WHC and ECCC. As required, WHC will work with the Awardee and with ECCC to acquire needed ECCC approval and Ministerial quote. Please use the news release template provided by WHC. News releases pertaining to the Program will include NHCP

boilerplate text and a Ministerial quote (if provided by ECCC) in order to promote the Government of Canada's funding. The Awardee will ensure that news releases intended for general audiences are distributed in both official languages.

- **Signage:** The Awardee is required to design, manufacture, and install property-based signage for partner recognition on NHCP-LTCF projects acquired through **fee-simple purchase**.
    - ***Exception:** *The signage requirement does not apply to Projects conserved through Conservation Agreements (easements, servitudes, or covenants).*

The cost to design, manufacture and install property-based signage for partner recognition is an eligible expense under the program. A template sign is available and is recommended for use. The sign template will be provided to the Awardee upon award notification.

- Before signage is manufactured, the design will need to be approved by WHC and ECCC.
- **Draft sign designs are to be submitted** to WHC as early in the program year as possible or by first installment.
- Property-based Program recognition signage will include the Government of Canada logo.

From time to time, project lands may be exempt from signage due to local concerns or inaccessibility (e.g. identification of species at risk habitat). Exemptions must be requested by the Awardee in a timely manner and approved by WHC and ECCC.

- **Property Photos:** The Awardee will be required to provide at least one high-quality image of the Project property(ies), for possible use in ECCC social media and other promotional materials. The Awardee will be required to provide authorization to WHC and ECCC for the use of the image(s). *In cases of an anticipated confidentiality/privacy conflict with this requirement, please contact WHC.*

A-3: Expense Eligibility

NHCP-LTCF funds can only be used to fund in-year expenditures associated with the securement of land via eligible transaction type or mechanism.

Chart 1 – Expense Eligibility under the NHCP-LTCF

Eligible project expenses will be those directly related to the project that have been **incurred between July 17, 2026, and March 31, 2027.**

Associated project expenses that occurred between **April 1, 2026, and March 31, 2027** may be applied to the project as **matching funds** (provided that the expenses were not paid for with other sources of Canadian federal funds).

***NEW:** Applicants may claim eligible staff expenses without a maximum dollar limit, provided that staff expenses do not exceed 15% of total eligible project expenses.

Charging Staff Time: Staff time AND/OR consultant time that is directly related to the project are eligible expenses, including all Staff time necessary for planning, negotiating, coordinating, managing and completing the project. Staff time cannot be expensed as in-kind match.

Volunteer Time: Can only be expensed as in-kind match.

- **Note:** Full-time or part-time staff **cannot donate** their time to a project as in-kind match; however, staff time can be applied as cash match in cases where this cost is covered by other non-NHCP-LTCF funds.

As per normal business practice, Awardees are expected to keep appropriate records, invoices and supporting documentation of all expenditures under the NHCP-LTCF program in anticipation of the financial project audit. Awardees are also expected to keep records and supporting documentation pertaining to staff time expensed under the NHCP-LTCF program.

A-4: Additional Requirements and Expectations under the NHCP-LTCF Program

If successful Applicants choose to accept NHCP-LTCF funds, the following describes the expectations and requirements under the NHCP-LTCF program:

a) NHCP-LTCF Funding Agreement

- Applicants must be prepared to review and sign a legal agreement (the *"NHCP-LTCF Funding Agreement"*) with Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC) **before submitting an Application Form**, as the terms of the agreement as presented in the template are not open for negotiation, with the only exception being possible minor modification.
- Applicants must review the NHCP-LTCF Funding Agreement Template before submitting an application form, as the terms and conditions set out in the template agreement are **not negotiable**, except that certain minor amendments may be permitted.

b) Baseline Documentation Reports (BDRs) for Conservation Agreement Only

All Conservation Agreements require a *Baseline Documentation Report (BDR)* be developed and signed by the landowner. Where possible, BDRs should be prepared prior to closing and signed by the landowner and land trust at, or prior to, closing. The BDR must also be registered on title, **in accordance with Provincial mechanisms**. Confirmation that the BDR has been completed and registered on title (in accordance with Provincial mechanisms) is required with Final Reporting.

Exception: In the event that seasonal conditions prevent the completion of a full BDR report by closing, the landowner and the land trust must sign a schedule for finalizing the full report and an acknowledgement of interim data at closing (CLTSP Standard 11.B). In this case, a completed BDR, registered on title (in accordance with Provincial mechanisms), is required **no later than 6 months post-closing**, and confirmation must be provided to WHC.

c) Project Audit

***New:** Projects receiving less than $100,000.00 in NHCP-LTCF funding must submit proof of expenses over $1,000.

***New:** Projects receiving $100,000.00 or more in NHCP-LTCF funding must submit an independent financial audit conducted by an external Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA). The financial audit statements must demonstrate the following (ensure the submitted audit format matches that of the audit example provided on the WHC website), which will be required to verify and sign off on:

- The full amount of the Stewardship Endowment Funds (SEF) has been deposited into the land trust's endowment account by the final reporting deadline and that the funds were sourced in accordance with program requirements;
- Verify all expenses and all funds used as a match;
- A minimum 1.5:1 match ratio;
- A list of all eligible expenditures by expense category; and;
- A breakdown of expenses applied to the NHCP-LTCF funds vs. those covered by matching funds (cash vs. in-kind);

- Projects using other sources of federal funds must provide a breakdown of the in-cash and in-kind funds applied from the other federal fund. A budget template with the necessary breakdown will be provided by WHC.

Please ensure to provide audit expenses and matches using the format used in the provided template of acceptable audit reports

Audit cost and payment

The cost of the audit will be covered **outside of the awarded NHCP-LTCF funds**, and therefore the audit cost should not be included in your NHCP-LTCF funding request.

WHC will pay for the cost of the audit, in accordance with the following:

- The **auditor must bill WHC directly** for the costs associated with the financial project audit;
- A copy of the audit must be received by WHC no later than **the final reporting deadline of February 15, 2027, 8:00 pm (ET);**
- The submitted audit must be approved by WHC and meet program requirements;
- Payment of the audit invoice will be made by WHC, following WHC's receipt and approval of the project's financial audit and final reporting.

*WHC will pay for **audits that are 2% (or less) of total LTCF funds received, up to a maximum of $3,500**.

d) Appraisal

The submission of an appraisal that has been completed by a designated appraiser (i.e., AACI) **within the last year** is a requirement of the NHCP-LTCF. Applicants are encouraged to review the (*Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices (2019)* section on appraisals.

***At application**, if a full appraisal has yet to be completed, then an assessment of the value of the project land(s) with clear rationale explaining how the value was determined will be required. Acceptable documents include a short form appraisal, a letter from your appraiser outlining how the value was determined, or a strong rationale and demonstration of market value prepared by the Applicant.*

- Appraisals must be completed based on **vacant land value only;** no land "improvement" value of any kind (e.g., home, barn, road, shed, etc.) is to be included in the Fair Market Value (FMV) valuation of the project land.
- For Conservation Agreement/Easement projects, the FMV of the Conservation Agreement/Easement must be identified in the appraisal.
- If the purchase price is less than 20% of the appraised Fair Market Value (FMV), the Land Trust must attest that the landowner has been informed that the FMV was determined independently and, understands that the resulting donation value may be higher or lower than the appraised fair market value, depending on the final transaction value.
- NHCP-LTCF funds can only be used to fund the fair market value of the purchase price, no greater than 5% above the appraised value of the property, as determined by the appraisal. For example, for a property appraised at $100,000, a maximum of $105,000 of NHCP-LTCF funds can be used towards the purchase price.
- Applications in which the land trust intends to pay 1%-5% above the appraised value will require WHC and ECCC approval. Paying above fair market value is strongly discouraged.
- The fair market value of the land indicated on the appraisal/assessed value should be reflected in the "Total Expense Amount" column for the Purchase/Sale Price line of the Project Budget.

- If the anticipated purchase price of the land is lower than the appraised value/assessed value, **and the remaining value donated**, the difference should be included in the column "Matching Funds (In-Kind)", and proof of donation will be required with Reporting.

- A full appraisal will be required by **first installment**, or sooner, as completed, and **must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to closing**.
- **To be an eligible expense**, the cost for an appraisal must have been incurred after April 1st, 2026 (within the current fiscal year).
- A full appraisal needs to be submitted and approved by WHC, prior to the release of any awarded funds.

d) Canadian Protected and Conserved Area Database

***New:** At the time of final reporting, land trusts receiving NHCP-LTCF funding will be required to confirm whether the funded conservation area associated with the project to be reported to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Area Database (CPCAD)

SECTION B – AWARD AND FUNDING PROCEDURES

B-1 First and Final Installments

a) When will WHC release the first and final installment?

- Installment invoices must be made out to Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC) and submitted to WHC for processing.
- WHC requires at least 3-4 weeks to process and release payment installments.
- WHC will electronically transfer funds for both the first and final installments.

First Installment: All correct, required documentation listed in *Chart 2 - Checklist of Required Documentation for Application and Installments* must be submitted to WHC to receive the first installment (for disbursement by WHC).

- The first installment will represent 80% of the total awarded funding amount.
- The first installment will be transferred no earlier than 5 business days prior to the closing date, either to the lawyer or authorized legal representative, to be held in trust, or directly to the land trust, if requested.

All projects already closed at first installment ***must* submit a post-closing report (Transfer deed) or Land title.

Final Installment: All correct, required documentation, listed in *Chart 2 - Checklist of Required Documentation for Application and Installments,* must be submitted to WHC by **February 15, 2027, 8:00 PM (ET).** Once reviewed and approved by WHC, the final installment will be released.

- The final installment will represent 20% of the remaining total awarded finding amount.
- The **final installment** will be transferred directly to the land trust following receipt and approval of Final Reporting documentation by WHC.
- All closed projects at final installment ***must*** submit a post-closing report (Transfer deed) or Land title.

GLOSSARY

Baseline Documentation Report (BDR): For every Conservation Agreement, the land trust has a Baseline Documentation Report (that includes a baseline map and photographs) prepared prior to, or at, closing, is signed by the landowner and registered on title (in accordance with Provincial mechanisms). Both the landowner and the land trust should hold at least one original copy. The report documents the important conservation values protected by the Conservation Agreement and the relevant conditions of the property as necessary to monitor and enforce the Conservation Agreement. In the event that seasonal conditions prevent the completion of a full baseline document report by closing, the BDR may include an interim BDR and an acknowledgement that it will be replaced by a full report.[1]

See full BDR requirements under *Section A-5b: Baseline Documentation Reports (BDRs) for Conservation Agreement*.

Canadian Land Trust: A Canadian "not-for-profit conservation organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by acquiring land or Conservation Agreements (or assisting with their acquisition) and/or stewarding/managing land or Conservation Agreements."[2]

The Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD): Is the national repository of the most up to date spatial and descriptive data on Canada's terrestrial and marine protected areas (PA) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM). Compiled and managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC),

Conservation Agreement: Also referred to as a Conservation Easement, Conservation Servitude, or Conservation Covenant, means a legal document in which a landowner agrees to restrictions on activities that would threaten the environmental value of the land. The Conservation Agreement allows the landowner to remain on the land while ensuring its protection from future development. The owner can keep that land in the family, sell it or donate it whenever he/she chooses, subject to the terms of the Conservation Agreement continuing to remain in full force and effect.

Conservation Planning Framework: Refers to a planning framework that can be used by an Applicant to define priority areas for acquisition and long-term stewardship. Please see the Conservation Planning Framework Template and *Section A-3f: Conservation Plan* for more information.

Final Recipient: Means a legal entity to which the WHC shall further distribute funds received under this Agreement. Eligible Final Recipients under the NHCP-LTCF are registered Canadian Charity Land Trusts who are in compliance or substantially in compliance with the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices 2019 or with the *Guide des bonnes pratiques en intendance privée: aspects juridiques et organisationnels*.

Key Conservation Areas: Key Conservation Areas means ECCC proposed Priority Places as well as other areas identified at the national, regional, provincial or local level through science-based conservation planning, which may be updated periodically.

Other Conserved Area or Other Effective area-based Conservation Measure (OECM): is "a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio–economic, and other locally relevant values" *(One With Nature definition, 2019).*

Project: For the full project definition under the NHCP-LTCF, see *Section A-3: Project Eligibility*.

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[1] *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices (2019), pg. 20.)*
[2] *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices (2019), pg. 26.)*

Protected Area: is "a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values" *(One With Nature definition, 2019).*

Split Receipts: The structure of a transaction which includes both cash payment for the purchase of land and also donation of land. Organizations and land trusts should be familiar with the CRA's guidelines for split receipting and how it relates to property transactions, including Ecological Gifts. If necessary, the land trust/organization should obtain outside experience to assist them with any split receipting transactions.[3] It is the full responsibility of the awardee to ensure compliance with applicable CRA rules and regulations.

Stewardship Endowment Fund: Is an internally or externally restricted fund invested to provide a permanent source of revenue for land stewardship. See Sections A-3n and A-3o for stewardship endowment requirements.

Volunteer: A volunteer is a person who works for an organization without being paid, a person who voluntarily offers themselves for a service or undertaking, or a person who performs a service willingly and without pay.

[3] *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices (2019), Standard 9.*